

No. 5

NOTES

OF A

TOUR FROM WESTMINSTER,

Through the Austrian Tyrol, Bavaria, Northern
Italy, and part of Switzerland, in search of Health
and the Picturesque.

BY

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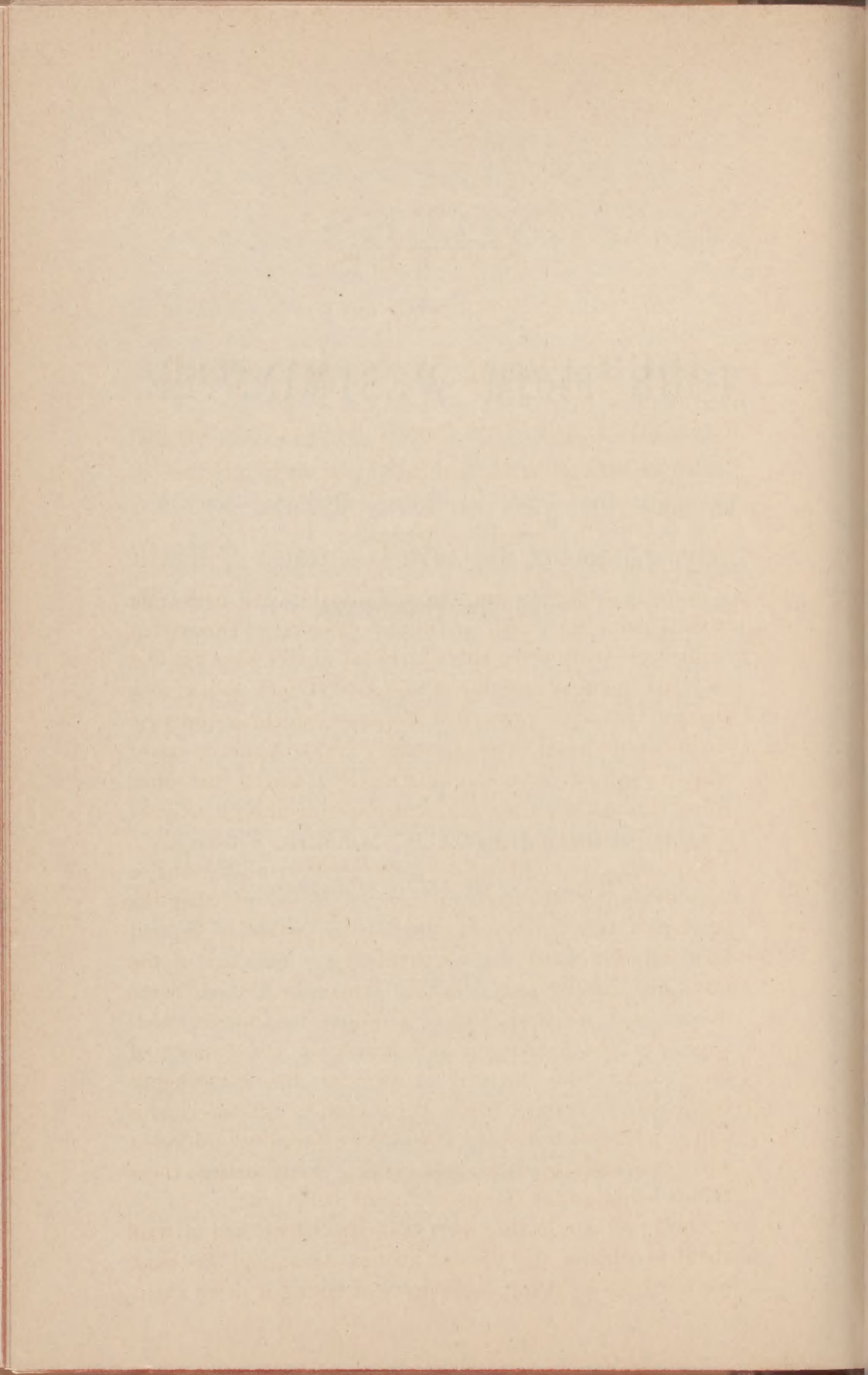
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NOTES

OF A

TOUR FROM WESTMINSTER,

Through the Austrian Tyrol, Bavaria, Northern Italy, and part of Switzerland, in search of Health and the Picturesque.

Starting from Charing Cross Station by the mail train at 8.25 p.m., Sept. 2nd, 1878, and sleeping at Dover that night, we—there being three included in this we—left Old England the next morning at about 10 o'clock and, after a pleasant passage across that Channel which inspires so much dread among those who never feel at home on board ship, we were soon alongside the pier at Calais, and, after going through the usual senseless crushing process, effected the transit from ship to rail.

Ensnconced in a first-class carriage, we started, after a long delay, for Brussels, finding out afterwards that the latter part of the train, in which we happened to be, had been detained until the forepart had got well out of the way; and thus we poor deluded "Innocents Abroad" were treated as if we were merely so much live lumber which might be dealt with as would best suit the convenience of these Continental Railway Autocrats; the consequence being that we arrived at our destination about four and a half hours beyond the time at which we were due. Moral—when you hear the hackneyed saying, "They manage these things better on the Continent," don't believe it.

Owing to our having been thus treated we had to wait about two hours at Lille for another train, and this time we filled up by doing a dinner and taking a drive about

the town and its environs, and then on to Brussels, where we arrived late in the evening and rested till the following morning, and being familiar with this good old city we resumed our journey immediately after breakfast.

Starting for Cologne, and having lunched at Verviers, duly arrived in good time for a "wash and brush up," and a walk about *the place par excellence* for scents and smells; the perfumery being admittedly very agreeable, but the unmentionable smells at times are atrocious. We were, however, well pleased with our walk, the first object having our attention being the grand old Cathedral, which we need scarcely say is not yet completed, and having looked around and through this vast and interesting pile, and into a few trade emporiums, at which we made a few modest purchases, including some photos representing objects of local interest, we returned to our hotel, the Hôtel du Nord, and played our part at the table-d'hôte; after which, in the evening, we still further explored Cologne by gaslight, the new electric illuminator not having at that time made its appearance in this famous City of Scents; and, in good time for a night's rest, deposited ourselves in our dormitories for the night.

The next day was devoted to a trip up the Rhine, the river which may be considered to be the glory of the land—mighty in its volume, picturesque in its character, and famed alike in history and in song for its beauties and its wine. We started, after an early breakfast, at 8.45 on board a steamboat named after one of Germany's great men, "Humboldt," and certainly had a most enjoyable trip up the old river, and were in no way disappointed in our expectations, raised as they had been, regarding "the beauties of the Rhine." Life on board the boat was rendered enjoyable by charming weather and the ample provision made for creature comforts, added to which, as the day wore on, we found agreeable company among the many passengers who were our fellow travellers—among the most agreeable being a party of ladies from America;

and in the evening between eight and nine o'clock we arrived at Bingen, where we landed and found comfortable accommodation for the night at the Victoria Hotel.

The next morning after breakfast we found we had time for a drive about the place and its suburbs, which occupied about an hour and afforded us no little pleasure. After this we started at 9.40 by rail for Munich, where we arrived in the evening at 9.10, and found comfortable quarters of first-class character at the "Hôtel zu den Vier Jahreszeiten." A night's rest and the morning meal fitted us for exploring this fine city, one of the art centres of the civilised world, famous for its architecture and its art treasures; and having devoted the day to sight-seeing, finished our work by a drive round the environs, taking note especially of the colossal bronze figure of "Bavaria" as being a marvellous fine specimen of the sculptor's and the founder's art; and also of the interior of the King's Palace, which was well worth a visit, but need not be described by us, as the Guide Books give all the information which the curious may desire.

In the evening we took the train for Innsbruck, the road winding through and over the Brenner Pass in the Austrian Tyrol, and this being the writer's first experience of Alpine scenery it struck him as being especially novel and charming, the highest level attained being about 4,500 feet above the sea. The next day being Sunday, we took the opportunity of attending morning service at the English Church, or rather in an upstairs room at the back of an hotel, in which the service of the Church of England is conducted by a Chaplain, and we could not help hoping that sooner or later a better state of things ecclesiastical may be found by English visitors at Innsbruck.

Late in the afternoon, as we found a train would call at the station and take us on to Bozen, we bade good-bye to Innsbruck, with its palatial buildings forming the prominent features of its principal street, shut in as that grand street is at one end, even in summer, by snow-capped mountains,

the whole forming a panorama of extraordinary and sublime character.

We arrived at Bozen late that night, and were fortunate in finding just room enough left for us in the hotel close to the station. The next day was devoted by the writer to an inspection of this quaint old town, his two friends visiting the celebrated "Earth Pillars," or "Dolomites," in the vicinity, which they effected by riding for seven hours on mules, and a three hours' walk under a broiling sun.

The difference in the style or character of these two towns is very striking—astonishing, indeed—considering that they are separated by only a few miles of intervening country; the architecture and arrangement of the houses, shops, and palatial residences of Innsbruck being of a high order; while the style and absence of artistic skill in the buildings and streets of Bozen suggest the idea that the place never was designed at all, but came into being as necessities arose, bit by bit, and, like Topsy, "grewed;" and there it is, a decidedly antique bit of antiquity, with its narrow, winding, promiscuously formed, zigzag, higgledy-piggledy streets, and its shops and shopkeepers all to correspond, the whole being unique, simple, and unsophisticated, almost primæval.

From Bozen we started onward in the afternoon, at about five o'clock, after a good dinner, in a travelling carriage drawn by four good horses, proceeding, when we got clear of the town, through a picturesque valley, bounded for the most part on one side of the road by high rocks and on the other by a stream, which we observed by the evidences left of its effects, was in winter a mountain torrent, and at about eleven o'clock at night we arrived at the ancient City of Trento, noted in history as the meeting place of "The Council of Trent."

We arrived at this place in the midst of a violent thunderstorm, which broke in its fury some few miles before the end of our journey, and the scene was awfully grand as we wended our way in the darkness, which was

momentarily illumined by flashes of lightning accompanied by such peals of thunder as we Englishmen had never heard in our own country, reverberating as it did among the rocks and everlasting hills around us; we thought ourselves fortunate in being able to close our open carriage so as to protect us from the heavy deluge of rain, in the midst of which we drove up to the gateway of the Hotel de la Ville, in the principal street, and were soon between some clean sheets and in the land of forgetfulness.

The next morning broke bright and fair, so after a most satisfying meal we strolled forth into the quaint old streets and market-place; our imaginative faculties being actively employed at every turn in our walk, conjuring up visions of the antediluvian past, suggested as such visions were by the peculiar character of the present, which we then beheld. The first object which had our serious attention was the ancient Cathedral, within the walls of which the "Council of Trent" was held, and first met in 1545; the next was a remarkable fountain of considerable antiquity and architectural excellence, and then we hunted up a few photos and little mementos of our visit to this notable place, and having also purchased a small stock of grapes, figs, and peaches in the market-place for our refreshment on the road, we started at 11 a.m. in our carriage for Riva, which is situated at one end of the "Lago di Garda," where we arrived at about four o'clock.

Having deposited our luggage in our respective bedrooms, and enjoyed refreshing ablutions—the inner man having been duly cared for *en route*, we engaged a boat and boatmen, and in truly luxurious ease were rowed up the charming lake, entering our boat from the steps of the garden wall of our hotel, our little voyage extending as far as the "Cascade," and there we landed and climbed a short distance up the face of rock; thus performing the usual pilgrimage to the spot from whence this beautiful Cascade is seen to the greatest advantage, rumbling and tumbling, and dashing and splashing from the rocky heights above

into the quiet lake below. On our way to this Cascade, one of our party, more venturesome than the other two combined, wishing for a bathe and a swim, took a header from the boat into the lake, returning to us like a "giant refreshed." From amidst the spray of the Cascade, we gathered specimens of the beautiful maiden-hair fern, which grows in profusion and luxuriance in the clefts of the rock; and then we entered our little bark and returned to our quarters at the head of the lake—the "Grand Hôtel Imperial Soliel, et Pension avec Bains, Situé sur le Lac," and the next ceremony was a dinner; we got through this satisfactorily, the dinner being served *al fresco*, in the garden, a little Eden without an apple of discord, between the hotel and the lake, the dining tables being arranged under some trees, with one end of each table abutting on the low wall which bounded the lake. The table tops being a few inches lower than the top of the wall, we could, and did while dining, throw crumbs and bits of bread to the trout in the lake, the water being so clear that the fish could be plainly seen contending among themselves for the supplies which they were in this way accustomed to receive; not knowing that those who thus fed them, had been fed by their own finny companions taken from among them, perhaps only a few hours previously, by the cunning craft of the fisherman, and cooked and served up on the tables from which the crumbs were thrown.

Well, after a night's rest and a very early breakfast by candle light at the same table we had dined at the evening before, we wended our way to a neighbouring wharf; and, after a formal inspection of our luggage at the Custom House, stepped on board a steamboat and started at five o'clock for Desenzano.

The trip up this lake was very charming, the striking novelty consisting of a succession of lemon groves on the margin of the lake and up its mountain sides; we inquired about the cultivation of the fruit and as to the commercial results, and were assured that the lemons grown in the

district had a high character and commanded a better price than any others, and felt quite sorry we could not stow away a supply for home consumption ; however, our sorrow, such as it was, lasting only a few minutes, was soon displaced by the pleasure afforded us as we steamed onwards by the constantly changing panorama, which was indeed exuberantly rich in its character ; our field glasses enabled us to distinguish the vine, the fig, and the olive trees, and to take in the numerous pretty bits of what may be called domestic landscape, snug châteaux, villas, and villages, embosomed in delicious nooks and corners in a kind of fairy land, reminding us of Hood's verse—

“There is a land of pure delight
Where Omelettes grow on trees,
And little pigs do run about,
Crying, ‘Eat me if you please.’”

We saw the Omelettes in the hotels, but the little pigs seemed to have given place to goats, the latter animal being the favourite in all mountainous countries, another illustration of the doctrine of “the survival of the fittest.”

At 9.15 a.m. we reached Desenzano, and indulged in the unusual but excusable luxury of a second breakfast, seeing that our first was taken at 4.30. We did this second meal at the railway station while waiting for an hour or so for the train which was to carry us to Lecco, to which place we were in due time conveyed ; passing through the celebrated and formidable quadrilateral between Desenzano and Brescia, and stopping for about two hours at Rovado, where we took a drive and had some slight refreshment at a restaurant, temptingly situated by the road side, and having a very pretty garden within its walled-in grounds ; and thus re-invigorated, we resumed our journey by rail and arrived safe and well at Lecco, on charming Lake Como, where we were joyfully received and warmly welcomed by the ladies of the family who had come from the Upper Engadin to meet us, and all proceeded at once by a lake steamer to Bellagio, reaching that delightful haven of rest at seven o'clock in the evening ;

and here we remained for several days "joyous and free," inhaling the pure and balmy air under clear Italian skies, living in one of the most comfortable hotels imaginable, and amidst scenery indescribably lovely. There is no disputing the fact insisted upon by political economists, that "demand induces supply," and it appears to the writer, that in obedience to this law, beneficent provision of an admirable character has been made in this part of the world for the tourists of the present day, the charges for which are by no means extravagant. The "Hôtel Grande Bretagne" at Bellagio is a case in point: we found it to be a comfortable home during our stay, and we record with pleasure our entire satisfaction with the attention paid to our requirements. It is charmingly situated near the lake in extensive and beautiful grounds with an ornamental garden in front, and in the rear the grounds rise to a great height and are most picturesque in character.

One afternoon we devoted to a visit to the "Villa Carlotta," which is on the opposite shore of the lake, and may be described as a mansion fit for an English country squire; plain in its exterior, and of no great pretensions to either beauty or comfort within, that is, according to our English notions of comfort, but charmingly situated. It contains some almost priceless specimens of statuary, from the chisel of Canova; among them being his Magdalene, Palamedes, Venus, and also his Cupid and Psyche; the works of Thorwaldsen also are copious and conspicuous on the walls of the marble hall.

The gardens and grounds of this villa are exquisite in every way; nature having been lavish in the original formation of the site, and its surroundings of mountains and lake, so much so that the visitor, fresh from less genial climes, in walking for the first time through the delicious groves, shaded here and there by orange and lemon trees laden with fruit, and by luxuriant shrubs and subtropical plants, can scarcely help being impressed with an idea of being in dream land, beyond the reach of dull care and its

concomitants, surrounded as he is in these enchanting grounds by all that is lovely and delicious in nature.

Descending from the upper part of this Italian paradise, which rises to a height far above the top of the villa, our minds being filled with visions of beatific scenes and enjoyments, we found our way through artistically designed gates of bronze, into a shady grove of such magnificent plane trees, as made us hope that we may see the time when our own, which have been planted, by the wise foresight and good taste of the Metropolitan Board of Works, upon the Thames Embankment, shall present an almost equal degree of beauty and vigour; and at the other end of this grove, in the village of Cadenabbia, we enjoyed a quiet half-hour's rest by the side of the lake, with magnificent mountains of varied height, outline, and character before us on the opposite shore, and on either hand, with a good hotel behind us—the Hôtel Belle Vue.

We fancy few travellers will differ from us when we say, that a good hotel cannot be a bad background to a charming front view; and we proved the excellence of such an arrangement, experimentally and practically, at Cadenabbia, by having recourse to the resources of the cuisine and cellar of this one, and feel bound in common honesty to say that we dined well; everything being plentiful and good, not excepting some Italian wine, which we approved and enjoyed; the cookery was artistic and excellent, and the whole tended to create a desire to repeat the experiment on a future occasion. After dinner, and having listened with some pleasure to some vocal music, with the accompaniment of a guitar by an Italian artist of some merit, we were conveyed across the lake to our hotel on the opposite side, the moon beaming on the waters, and thus ended a delightful afternoon and evening.

The next day we took a trip down the lake to Como, the capital of the province, and the birth-place of two men of scientific genius of whom Italy may be proud, viz., the younger Pliny and the electrician and philosopher Volta;

and from Como we went on to Milan by rail, and no words at our command can fittingly express the favorable impression we received of this city and its Cathedral; no doubt there are there, as in all cities, common-place and objectionable features, but it was not our object to hunt up and drag them to light. We went to see the beauties, the choice in art, the correct in taste; and these we saw, and felt grateful that we had the opportunity of paying a visit to Milan.

The Cathedral, with its almost endless number of buttresses, deliciously delicate pinnacles—each of the latter being surmounted with a finely sculptured statue; and in the inside, its groined arches, and exquisite ceilings and traceries excited our admiration; the whole, inside and out, being composed of white marble, combining to produce an effect which is perhaps matchless; and having thus feasted our mental faculties by the survey of this noble work, and also glanced at some of the notable architectural triumphs in and about the Royal Arcade, effected by the “City of Milan Improvements Company,” at the cost of credulous English shareholders, under the guidance of clever financiers, we attended to the wants of the inner man by ordering and partaking of a genuine Milanese dinner of the first-class, and we were unanimous in our opinion that it *was* a dinner; we then returned to Como by an evening train, and rested there that night.

In the morning, at nine o'clock, we returned up the lake by steamer to Bellagio, and these two trips on the lake on two succeeding days afforded us the opportunity of seeing it and its surrounding mountains, with the numberless villas and gardens on its shores and mountain sides, under the two extremes of storm and sunshine; for, on our outward trip, we had heavy rains and thunder-storms, the effects of which were very grand, if inconvenient, as indeed they proved to be in the evening, to an operatic company who had to travel that afternoon from Como to Bellagio, to perform “Il Trovatore” there in the evening; the

consequence being that the audience had to wait an hour for the commencement of the Opera, and then found that the artists were ~~quite~~^{quite} unfitted for their tasks by sea sickness ! and this on Lake Como, quiet, calm, serene, and lovely beyond description, as it was the next day. We who only had to enjoy our holiday, esteemed it an advantage that we thus had the satisfaction of seeing this charming lake under opposite conditions ; the one grand, menacing, raging, turbulent, and imposing ; the other so quiet, peaceful, serene, charming, and lovely, that its seductive beauties can never be forgotten.

During our stay at Bellagio, we were so fortunate as to witness a contest on the lake between several yachts—a regatta happened to come off—and shall always have a pleasant recollection of the day thus spent on board a steam-boat on Lake Como, the weather being bright, the air balmy, and the surrounding scenery rich beyond description.

It was also our good fortune to have the opportunity of seeing how a grand illumination and pyrotechnic display is managed in Italy ; for, in the grounds of the Villa Melzi, which adjoin those of the Hôtel Grande Bretagne, an annual display of both is given by the owner, a rich Italian count, in honour of the king's birth-day ; and this is done on a magnificent scale, costing the count, we were told, some thousands of pounds sterling. The illumination was effected by myriads of Chinese lanterns, festooned on lines extending from tree to tree in the extensive grounds, not only where the trees grew in lines bordering paths, but up the mountain side, and in scores or hundreds of boats upon the lake, and on the opposite shore. The fireworks were displayed partly on shore in front of the villa and partly on the lake, from barges moored for the purpose ; the whole was a great success, artistically considered, and very gratifying to us visitors, and so far as our good wishes were concerned, we could only hope that the machinery of Italian government may, at no distant date, be managed with equal success.

Having enjoyed for a whole week, mild dissipation and luxurious life in the midst of such scenery, which, for magnificence, radiant beauty, and loveliness, the writer had never seen equalled, we packed up our belongings, paid our little bill, and bade adieu to Bellagio at 10.30 on the morning of Wednesday the 18th, crossing the lake on board a steamer and landing at Menaggio.

From this place we travelled in two carriages to Porlezza, the road being hilly, the intervening villages quaint and picturesque, and the scenery nearly all the way a mixture of the grand and the charming, and having arrived at Porlezza we embarked on board a steamer which conveyed us on the bosom of Lake Lugano to the town or city of that name, arriving at about four o'clock in the afternoon. We sorted ourselves and our *impedimenta* into comfortable rooms in the best hotel, always being guided in our choice by the conviction that "the best of everything is good enough," and then we took a stroll and made ourselves sufficiently acquainted with Old Lugano to enable us to recognise and feel at home in it when we go again.

In the evening we dined at the table d'hôte, in a palatial saloon, very much of the same character as those of most of the good modern hotels in Italy and Switzerland, which have been provided to satisfy the wants of the numerous foreign visitors to these countries, and after a night's rest and good breakfast, we formed our little party of nine, into two detachments of five and four respectively, and, leaving the latter to pursue a different route, we started in a carriage with three horses for Faido, where we arrived at eight o'clock in the evening, having had a very enjoyable journey, dining at Bellinzona and stopping also for half-an-hour at Biasca, and, after a night's rest at Faido, and a dinner at Airolo, which for the most part is being rebuilt, after having been destroyed by fire not long since, we set out to cross the St. Gothard, the Pass being a wonderful road, designed with great skill, and effected and maintained

at great cost by the Government; not at all the kind of travelling to suit nervous persons, and soon to be almost superseded by a tunnel which is now in course of construction, through the very bowels of the mountain, for a railway; the length of this tunnel, which is not far from completion, will be over nine miles.

Having crossed the St. Gothard, bought some mineralogical specimens on its summit, and partaken of some slight refreshment at a village at its foot, we reached Andermat in good time for dinner, and in the evening visited a shop, store, or museum, for it might be called either, and added to our stock of mementos, specimens of crystals, lapis-lazuli, moss agates, and photos, and then to roost.

The following morning we drove to Fluelen, a pretty little town, snugly situated at the upper end of a branch of Lake Lucerne, and from thence we proceeded by a lake steamer to Brunnen, where we disembarked and took a carriage-drive up to the hotel Axenstein, which is perched on a rock eight hundred feet above the surface of the lake, and two thousand two hundred and thirty-four feet above the level of the sea, and having arrived here on Saturday afternoon we rested till Monday morning, and were well satisfied with our visit; the hotel commanding most magnificent scenery, mountain being succeeded by mountain, with the grandest imaginable outlines, some with snow-clad summits, and others covered in part by glaciers gradually creeping down their sides—the height of one being 9,620 feet.

On Monday morning, at 10.30, we started for Lucerne, and arrived at 1.10 p.m., by a steamer up the lake, calling at several stations *en route*, among them being Vitznau for the Rigi Railway, and if asked to say which lake one would consider the best as regards scenery—Como or Lucerne—the writer, first inclining to one and then the other, would feel how happy he could be with either,

"were t'other dear charmer away;" they are alike in one respect, they are both very beautiful.

Having seen Lucerne and dined comfortably at the "Hotel Grande Nationale," we resumed our journey at 4.45 p.m., travelling by rail to Bale, where we arrived at 7.45, and after an evening meal retired to rest till 5.30 next morning, when we were called, and, after an early breakfast, took the train at 7.15 for Paris, where we had arranged for a stay of two days for a second peep at the "Great Exhibition;" and having had this final peep, we left the "gay city" and its multitude of foreign visitors and returned to our "Island Home," more than satisfied with our tour; the effects having been decidedly beneficial so far as our health was concerned, and also by the additions to our experience and acquaintance with the solid crust of the earth, of the civilized portions of which Old England and her vast dependencies form a very important part. And seeing with how little wisdom the world in general is governed, and comparing the governmental machinery of other nations with our own; we rejoice more than ever, in the fine and solid old constitutional form of government which we have inherited from our forefathers, and under which we have lived and thrived, while thrones and kingdoms have, even in the present generation, been shaken and overthrown, and instability and insecurity have been conspicuous in almost every other country in Europe.

Hence, in the midst of the present depression of trade, while looking back on the past, we enter upon the new year with a hopeful spirit and confident expectations of renewed prosperity, peace, and plenty.

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6th January, 1879.